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# HOPE FOR OUR COUNTRY.

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## A SERMON,

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West. Ind. Hlth. Soc.

PREACHED IN THE SOUTH CHURCH, SALEM,

OCTOBER 19, 1862,

BY

REV. ISRAEL E. DWINELL.

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## HOPE FOR OUR COUNTRY.

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Ezek. xx, 36—38. “Like as I pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I plead with you, saith the Lord God. And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant: and I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me.”

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God chose the Jews for a great mission, and remembered the object and the covenant; and when they were unfaithful, pleaded with them, chastised them, and brought them back. This continued through many successive generations and centuries. He passed them, fathers and sons, as they needed it, “*under the rod,*” and brought them “*into the bond of the covenant.*” The motive was mercy, love; hence the scourging was not for destruction but correction. The passing “*under the rod*” was to bring “*into the bond of the covenant.*”

May we not hope this is so in the case of our Country? May we not believe it? God is certainly pleading with us, and causing us to “*pass under the rod:*” may we not believe, are there not good reasons to believe, that it is not to destroy us, but to bring us into *covenant-bonds* with him?

I am not one of the desponding and foreboding prophets. I can see light *beyond*, and I think *through* this darkness. I do not believe we are going to swift ruin. I believe that we are coming up, and have been, steadily, for the last two years ; and that hereafter this crisis and bloody agony will mark one of the brightest turning-points of our national history. And I think it is well, in these days of darkness, when the newspapers chronicle barren movements of our armies, or daring raids of the enemy, or repeat the standing announcement, "All quiet along the Potomac," and when old advertisements, week after week, fill the places where we eagerly look for flaming capitals announcing great victories,— to inspirit our confidence by looking at the *moral elements, the permanent principles and facts* of the contest. I have more faith in principles, in virtues, in ideas, in right and justice, more faith in God as upholding and favoring these, than I have in the varying fortunes of armies and navies. And when, for the time, the prospects from the latter look dark, or not specially hopeful and encouraging, I do not despair of the former, nor through them of the ultimate triumph of the cause of the Republic.

Let me, then, give some of *the reasons I have for Cheerfulness and Hope in relation to the Future of our Country.*

The fundamental encouragement comes from the fact that *God reigns*, and reigns *in the interest of his kingdom*. The destiny of the nations is in his hands, and he is engaged in building up a kingdom of righteousness and peace. How can we believe, therefore,

that he designs ultimately to give this land up to anarchy and desolation? It cannot be. The final state of this country will be one of prosperity and blessing, though there is nothing in this consideration alone, to show that there may not be long and wasteful agony before it is reached. The glorious future is sure, because God reigns, and reigns for that future; and because he reigns for that, I believe he will help us into it as soon and as fast as we are prepared for it,—in any event, sometime; and because he reigns for that, also, this present trouble is one step in his providence towards it. This is the ground of my confidence.

I also derive encouragement from *the analogy of political changes and events elsewhere in modern times*. They suggest the thought that God, having spent former ages in the elementary lessons and preparations of christian civilization, is now simply employing political changes to bring the nations more directly into it. He seems to have abandoned the former circuitous method, and to have adopted a more speedy one. Nearly all the great modern convulsions have resulted in the signal and immediate advantage of christianity. The English war with China was in fact but a hideous and ugly phantom, going before christianity, leveling down Chinese walls, and letting in the Gospel, to make trial of the swarthy, unspiritual millions. The war in India was as remarkable for christianizing the previous essentially pagan policy of the English, in the government of that country, as for hastening the downfall of the waning pagan religions

themselves; so that the religious prospects of that populous country were never before so bright as on the day when that war closed. In like manner, the cannon of the French and English in the Crimean war were no more effective in destroying the Russian fleet, or in battering the Redan and Malakoff, than in shattering Turkish prejudices, and opening the empire of the Moslems to the gospel of Christ. The revolutionary changes in Italy, also, have unchained the Bible, loosed the missionary from his dungeon, and let a free and pure christianity out into the open air and the light of the sun. May we not believe that these facts reveal God's present method? that he has no need now, in modern times, after all the discipline of his providence, and all his preparations, to continue the circuitous process, but can make political changes direct steps in the advancement of his kingdom? And may we not think that he is doing here what he has been doing elsewhere,—preparing some signal good for us,—leading us by a “*short cut*” into some great blessing?

I have also a measure of hope from *the strength of the vital bands which bind modern civilized society together*. The dependence of the individual on society, in a state of high civilization, for happiness and comfort even, is complete—far greater than in savage or half civilized life. The savage can get along without his fellows; not so the civilized man, in these times of the division of labor and mutual dependence. Hence the strongest and ultimately the governing instincts of modern society are towards law

and order, stable government, peace and good will towards man. The interlacing fibres of society are now strong ; and when other wants or passions rend them for a time, they speedily become quiet again, and quiet produces soundness and health. Accordingly in countries which have been swept over by successful revolutions, the vital interests of the people have experienced only a temporary injury. All the vital and essential institutions have outlived the shock. Forms have changed, but substances remained. The inner life of the people is the same, and the things they hold most dear, though their outward relations are altered. All the good, in government, which their civic worth entitles them to, they retain, or speedily regain. Thus a revolution in France is but a ripple on the surface. The national spirit, institutions, and essential forms and methods of intercourse, business, and law, flow on the same, substantially, under King, Constituent Assembly, Consul, Emperor, King again, Emperor once more, and then King, and then President, and finally Emperor. France survives Revolutions, never but for a moment sinking below her own moral and spiritual level, never but for a moment rising above it. Revolutions in France are like the winds which sweep over her, not materially touching her, though for the time causing her forests and harvests to bow before them.

I am apprehensive, however, of no such outward change in our government. Not at all. But if there should be some slight modification of our political system, as the result of the present war—as there may be ; and even if there should be a

great and radical modification—which I do not believe there will be,—there is not the slightest probability that the under-life of the nation would be disturbed. We should continue to be just what we are, to live just as we do live, and to have all the blessings we now have, essentially ;—all the blessings our mental and moral worth entitles us to have. We have no occasion, even if the worst phantom of political change, which has risen before any feverish brain, should prove a reality, to despair of the future. And this hope I build, you remember, on the inherent vitality and indestructibleness, the *immortality* you may call it, of modern civilized society, which enables it to pass through the furnace of revolutions without even the permanent smell of fire upon it.

But I have special reason for hope in reference to the future of *our* country on account of *the character of our people*. They are generally intelligent, understand their interest, think for themselves, and are under the power of no corrupt and designing leaders ; and what is far more, there is a great amount of solid political virtue and patriotism among them. We love money, indeed ; are selfish ; sometimes forget country in party ; often have strong sectional prejudices ; are not a little influenced by personal favoritism ; and many are corrupt all through ; yet I believe there is not another nation in which there is so much *civic worth*, both in mind and heart. Let the emergency come, to test principle, as it is coming, and it will not be wanting. Our people are not the material for

despots to lord it over ; for corrupt men to use ; for some ambitious general to ride, into a dictatorship ; for politicians to sell ; for office-seekers to seduce to partisan issues, when Liberty is at stake. They are not the stuff for a Robespierre, nor a Dr. Francia, nor a Napoleon I. or III., nor a Cromwell even. Nor are they the men to consume one another in anarchy, or to play the part of the Mexican. I have confidence in their essential civic worth ; and hence I have confidence in the future of the Republic. They are not the men that will see it destroyed, or their rights and freedom wrested from them, or this country given over to wicked and corrupt government. The essentials of good government are here, in the minds and hearts of the people, and in their stout arms ; and such a government they will have, — and such a government is one like that we have now. I do not fear lest it will in some way be destroyed by the present shock of arms. It will live, in its essential integrity. It is grounded in too many loving souls and brains and muscles, all over the land, to totter and fall in our day, or our children's day. Almost every person you see is a living pillar of it, holding it up with every pledge of influence, property, and life. The exceptions are not *worth* the mentioning. Despair not, my friends, of the Republic, till this race of Americans is no more.

I am confirmed in this estimate by the grand spectacle now before our eyes, of *the uprising of more than a million armed men*, to defend our “altars and hearths,” and save our country. This shows that I

have not overestimated the civic worth and mettle of our people. The present is a pledge and prophecy of the future. I look upon this uprising of the loyal population, and their enthusiastic and stupendous movements, civil and military, in favor of free and popular government, for the last eighteen months, with awe and pride. We, in the midst of the scenes, see instances of poor generalship, incompetency, blundering, speculation, fraud, cowardice, treachery—something of the infinite waste and demoralization incident to war ;— but time will cover up these blemishes of the sublime and beautiful picture, and bring out in vivid colors the Patriotism, the Heroism, the Enthusiasm, the Self-sacrifice, the Civic Glory ; and fifty years hence I should not be afraid to compare the last eighteen months with the other golden eras of history.

But I have another ground of hope for our land. This is a *christian* land, not by the courtesy of classification, but more ; there is, compared with any other people, a large percentage of *really godly and praying persons in it*. They supply the spiritual conditions of vitality and continuance, and these are the most important and influential of any. We have no reason to indulge in spiritual pride. Rather we have reason, before God, for confession and humiliation, in view of many and great sins, individual, social, and national. Yet you may always give yourself the benefit of the truth ; and the truth is, this is a land—as lands go—of real piety and devotion. From this fact I derive a double encouragement:—*First*, the prin-

ciple comes in, that God will spare the place for the sake of the *fifty, forty, twenty, ten* righteous in it, — a fact, doubtless, which has kept many a semi-Sodom from destruction ; and *second*, we have the independent power and efficacy of their prayers, pleading for our Country. Christians in themselves, silent and alone, are “the *salt* of the earth;” and *praying* christians have power with God and prevail, and christians all over the loyal states are praying to God to save and bless us.

Again, I derive comfort in remembering that our fathers, in founding our institutions and civil system, *covenanted with God*. They dedicated this land to him. Their object was a religious one, their aim to honor him ; and they entered into covenant-bonds with him, for themselves and those who should live after them. It was a mutual transaction. Their signature was affixed in legible human characters ; his in the favoring providences that followed. Thus their sons, our institutions, and the Republic itself, were all born into the bonds of the covenant. Many of the sons have themselves recognized and re-ratified the covenant ; feel that this is God’s land, these are God’s imperiled institutions ; and plead with a covenant-keeping God, to interpose and save his own. I do not believe that God will disown us, that he will forget the covenant with the fathers and the sons, that he will cast off his inheritance. No, no ; rather, though we have strayed from him often and in many ways, I seem to hear him saying : “ Like as I pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of

Egypt, so will I plead with you. And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and *I will bring you into the bond of the covenant ; and I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me.*”

Moreover, it strengthens my hopefulness to reflect on the *kind of our civilization and institutions*. With one sad exception, which must be borne in mind, our civil system represents the highest light of modern times. It is the embodiment of the best ideas of civil government of the Nineteenth Century. We had the advantage in this country of starting into national being but a short time ago, adopting the wisdom of the Old world, engrafting it in the New, and repudiating the follies and evils. We have no hereditary wrongs.—You must take along with you the exception.—We have no obsolete and burdensome customs. Society here is not stratified in fixed, unsympathizing, jealous classes. Government is not lodged, in whole or in part, in the hands of a permanent or hereditary family, clique, party, or interest. No union of State and Church arrests the freedom of ecclesiastical life, or vitiates the purity of individual and public religion. There is the freest possible scope and incentive for manhood,—the manhood, whatever it is, much or little, of every citizen. Surely the elements and possibilities of human progress and a rich nationality—of some solid contribution to the cause of humanity, exist here, if anywhere. And it seems to me that the world—and I say it knowing the danger and the sin of presumption, but I say it not as an American, but more, a man regarding the interests of the whole race,—

*that the world* cannot afford to spare us. But this is a dangerous point, and I leave it. This at least is safe : unless there is some other good reason for our destruction, God certainly will not destroy us *because* our country has so many elements of hope and promise. Other things being equal, this is in our favor.

I am also encouraged from this consideration : we are in the midst of an *unfinished experiment of a new kind* of government. There has never before been a trial of a Free Representative government, a government of Popular Rights and Duties, among a large Christian people ;—and such a government more nearly corresponds with the intimations in Scripture of the Divine choice, than any other. Some such system will doubtless be the final or millennial form, when all shall be “ kings and priests unto God.” Now, Christian nations have made full trial of other kinds of government,—Absolute, Centralized, Monarchical, Aristocratic, *Confederate*. They have little more to learn about their worth or capabilities. They have measured their capacity. No new lessons of any value can be taken from them. It is not so in reference to a large Christian Republic. The trial of this, so nearly coincident with the Divine idea, is reserved for the last. The experiment is novel. And if it should be arrested here, who would think it had been fairly tried ? who would not say the world has something yet to learn about Self-Government ? who, in coming ages, would not wish America back to finish her mission ?

Now, we can not say that God may not remove a nation—just as he sometimes removes individuals—

which, to human view, seems more promising and hopeful than any other at the time. He has done it, in at least two instances;—when the Jews, a nation with the Bible and divine ordinances, were overcome by Pagan Rome, and their nationality perished outwardly; and when, several centuries later, this same Roman Empire, but now christianized and, alone of the nations, having the gospel in trust, was vanquished by the Pagan tribes of the North. But in both these cases there was this peculiarity: they had obviously fulfilled their mission. They had been raised up to prepare a certain legacy for the future; they had prepared it; and it was found that they could hand it over to mankind in a purer and better condition by their demise as nations, than by their continuance. Hence they perished; and the race without obstruction entered into their labors, and a comparatively dead religion, in both cases, lost its civil support, and thus was the revival of a purer and living religion made ultimately possible and easy.

Our mission as a nation, on the contrary, seems still immature. If we stop here, we have wrought out no valuable ideas. We leave no legacy to the world, but, as it were, of the failure of a legacy,—a work begun but unfinished,—a lesson of confused meaning. We teach it nothing about the value or worthlessness of Free Institutions. And the very thing for which God seems to have raised us up, and given us a place among the nations, is unaccomplished. I do not believe that this will be. We shall finish our work. We shall teach mankind some positive and decisive lesson about this novel

and yet christian idea of a State. The new and the last experiment of government will not pass away as a spectre which men witness and then dispute about, not agreeing concerning its form, movements, or objects. God will not remove so great and powerful a nation, for which he has done so much, till it has fulfilled its mission, and made a definite mark on the world's destiny.

I augur well for our country, also, because I believe *this is the last great struggle of slavery, and God has appointed us to meet and vanquish it for all coming time.* There are many things which lead me to think that slavery is now mustering its forces for a *final* conflict. In ancient times, it rested its claims on the right of conquest, of the stronger, of force; then on civil welfare and the advantage of the upper classes; still later, and in modern times, on unavoidable but reluctant necessity, and the welfare of the slave; now, on inherent Right, Christianity, the Bible,—on every obligation sacred and profane, on earth and in heaven! It employs, you perceive, the *final* arguments. It can invent none higher, none lower. It can wield no greater lies. It can use no more reckless or defiant logic, no more presumptuous or blasphemous rhetoric. It has also exhausted legislation in its behalf, and state-craft, and diplomacy. And at this moment it is staking for it all its wealth, resources, and population, in an unheard of rebellion and bloody civil war. Surely these are the characteristics and elements of a final struggle. It is mustering now more resources of all kinds than it

can ever summon into the field again ; and if it fails here and now, the death-knell of slavery will virtually be sounded in our world.

If this is so, will God suffer us, the chosen champion against it, to perish ? Will he appoint us to represent His interests in this deadly issue, and then permit us to fail ? I do not believe it. If we fall, what will be the end of the heaven-daring and blasphemous *sin* ? Who, in all this world—we may, in the light of recent events, now well ask—can or will grapple with it ?

And, once more, I am greatly encouraged because we are beginning *to put ourselves right* in reference to this very issue. The cause of the war is clearly slavery ; and we tried for a long time—the government, generals, the army, the people—to fight the war, and save the sin ; and God would not suffer it. Gradually, but rapidly, he has converted us to the ways and demands of righteousness and humanity. And now the Proclamation of the President puts us right. Now we are openly and directly on the side of God ; and now we may hope to have his favor. It is not often that in great civil commotions moral principles are brought into such direct conflict, as they now are here. They usually are mixed and confused with other influences and considerations. I cannot doubt, therefore, if we are true to our present promise, on which side God will lend his aid. I believe that, as he has permitted the conflict to come upon us because of slavery, suffering it to make one final stupendous rally with all its argu-

ments and forces, and as we have now decided to accept the issue, as one between Light and Darkness, Christianity and Barbarism, face to face, he will enable us to crush it, once for all, for the good of our country and the world, and to survive the conflict. Our right moral position, now proclaimed by the President, sustained by our armies and patriotic toils and sacrifices, and divinely quickened by our prayers and pleadings, taken in contrast with the infamous moral position of the rebels, is in itself, when we remember that a God of Justice reigns, a host, and should encourage the most desponding heart. I did not despair of the Republic before ; for I saw that the issue was virtually one between Freedom and slavery ; but now that this issue is officially recognized on our side, as well as on the other, and that hereafter our policy will be directly in the interests of Freedom, I am sanguine and exultant. We are now, on this point and so far, clearly with God, and I believe God will be with us.

These are some of the things which make me hopeful and confident in regard to the future of our country. I have dwelt only on considerations arising from peculiarities on our side. When I contrast these, however, with those on the other side, I am much more sanguine. It seems to me that there was hardly ever in the history of the world, considering the light of the Nineteenth Century, a less promising candidate for the favor of Heaven, than the Southern Rebellion. I concede daring, energy, an unexpected fertility—a certain unnatural and

satanic kind of desperation and reckless furor. I concede good generalship, a large army, and many successes. I concede a mean and low sympathy in England and on the continent, among the classes jealous of America. But the foul and wicked origin of the candidate, his avowed principles and objects, his blasphemous assumptions and arguments, his appearance on the stage as the armed and bloody champion of the Middle Ages and Barbarism, his malignant assault on the application of the great ideas of Freedom and Equality, Justice and Humanity, which are the glory of modern times,—these things will ultimately, I imagine, procure for him small favor with the Arbiter of the destiny of nations. When, therefore, I look at our side, and see the noble moral elements in the objects for which we fight, and then cast my eyes Southward, and contrast with them the shameless and untimely immoralities contended for on the other side, I can not believe,—no, never, never,—that this is the time when God will overthrow Freedom and the ideas of Right and Humanity he has been slowly working out into practice for thousands of years, and inaugurate the Evangel of Slavery, the satanic creed of Despotism and Selfishness.

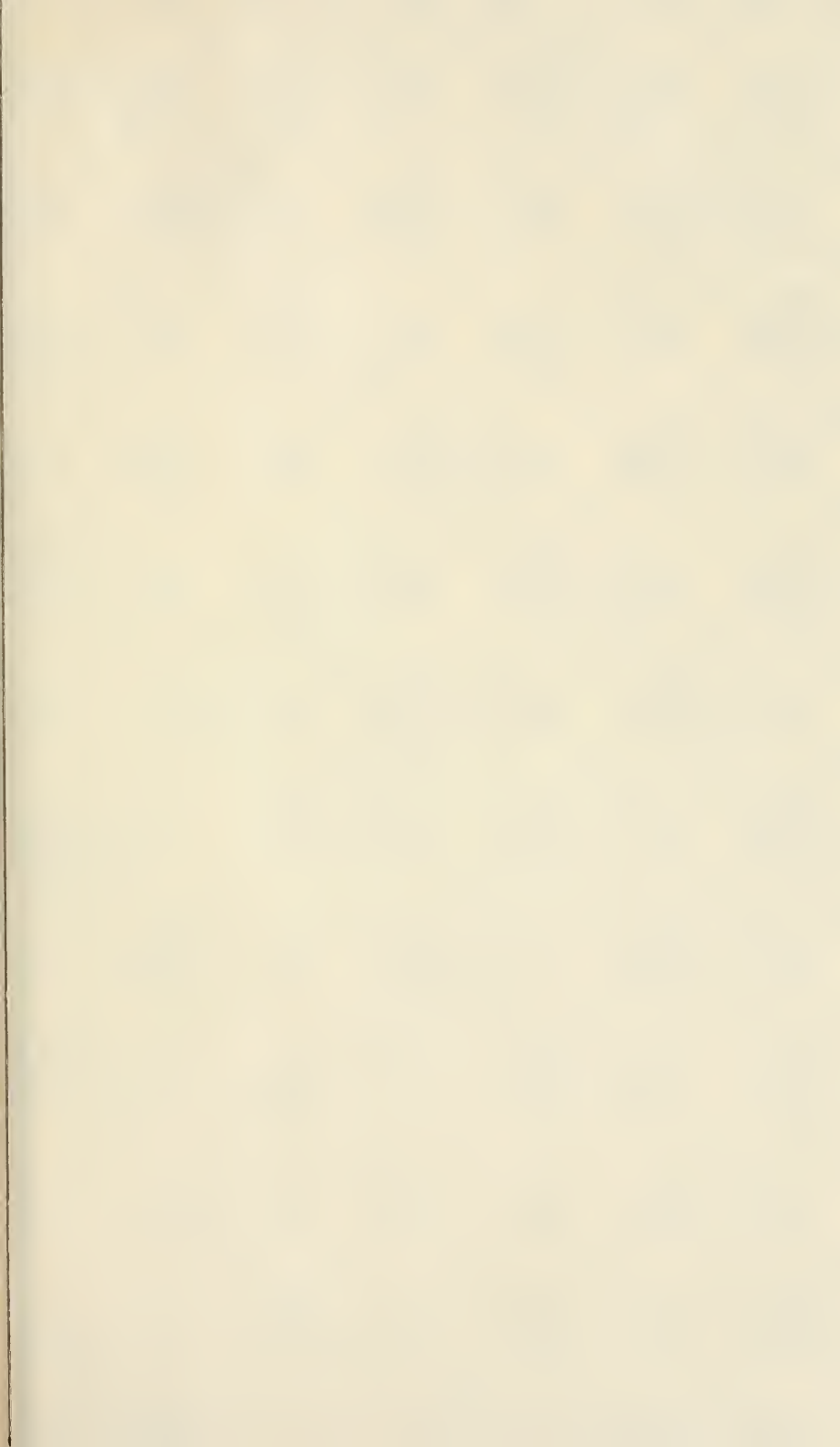
Let us, then, my friends, fellow-countrymen, not despond, nor doubt; nay, let us take courage and hope. Let us lean on God and the great principles of Truth and Righteousness. Let us be true to the ideas and issues involved in this contest, and entrusted to us, and we can not fail,—God will never

let us ; and we shall freely contribute our substance, freely surrender fathers and sons and brothers, and freely give ourselves, as duty may call,—and not feel that the sacrifice is thrown away and wasted, or that the price is too great. We need to look above the anxious and changing aspects of the contest, and stay ourselves on the reigning God of Justice, and the sublime Ideas and Merits of our Cause, and only look below to see and do our Duty.

Let us then hold up our faces where the light from Above may fall on them, and be reflected around us, and no longer carry them downward where earthly mists and exhalations darken them, and thus use us in diffusing and increasing the gloom. And as we thus become strong within, let those around us, let the Cause, let our Country have the benefit of it. Let us bear our part of the troubles of the times with firm hearts ; quicken and encourage one another ; and give the Government, our brave men in the field, and all in earnest in suppressing the Rebellion, the advantage of a cheerful and hopeful spirit, warm sympathy, and effectual support and devotion. Thus shall we be serene, peaceful, hopeful, confident, and in the end successful.

*God hasten it in his time.*









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